Namdhari Sikhs of Punjab:

Historical Profile

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There are a large number of Sikh sects and cults: *Udasi, Mina, Sewa Panthi, Nirmala, Ram Rayia, Hindaliya, Dhirmalia, Gulabdasi, Nirankari, Namdhari, Neeldhari, Hoti Mardan, Damdami Taksal and Nanaksari*. Their origin can be dated back to the early seventeenth century. The scope of this essay has been confined to the Namdhari sect. It examines the origin of this sect, a transformation in the structures of beliefs andpractices, role in the national struggle and administrative hierarchy and demographic status since its inception.

Introduction

In the history of modern Punjab, the *Namdhari* Sikhs are known by the *Kuka Movement* which was launched by their guru Ram Singh in late nineteenth century. Since then, several articles, monographs and books have been produced on the founder and his movement. Earliest among these writings were "the *Bara Mahas* of Baba Chanda Singh, Sant Nihal Singh and Kala Singh which pertain to late 19th and early 20th century whereas *Bara-Mahas* of Suba Mihan Singh, Sant Teja Singh Sukhal, Sant Iqbal Singh and Chattar Singh Bhoir pertain to mid twentieth century. Similarly, *Satguru Bilas* of Santokh Singh Kadrabadi and of Santokh Singh Bahowal were written during the period of Namdhari Gurus Hari Singh (1872-1906) and Partap Singh (1906-1959).[1] These Bara Mahas eulogized the role and status of Satguru Ram Singh and his confidants. They projected him as the messenger of Akal Purakh who launched his divine mission. They constructed the theory of continuity of Guruship and described Baba Balak Singh and Baba Ram Singh as the eleventh and twelfth Sikh Gurus. This theory was reiterated by the Namdhari writers Inder Singh Chakarvarti and Nidhan Singh Alam. They evolved the attributes of the Namdhari *maryada* and *ardas* (supplication). Their theory of continuity of guruship was seriously contested and rejected first by the Singh Sabha scholars in late nineteenth century and then by Bhai Sewa Singh and Dr.Ganda Singh in the first half of twentieth century. The former wrote *Guru Pad Nirne* (1934) and latter *Kukian Di Vithia* (1944) and *Guru Gobind Singh's Death at Nanded: Examination of Succession Theories* (1972). His reformative paradigm deconstructed guru status of Baba Ram Singh and his deviation from the established Khalsa *maryada*. The Namdhari Sikhs were annoyed with his inferences. For restoring the exalted status of Satguru Ram Singh and asserting his revolutionary role, Alam wrote *Jug Paltau Satguru* in 1948. His task had already been done by the Indian revolutionaries (of Punjab), Congress and Arya Samajist patriots. Sardul Singh Kavisher, a Congress leader, projected Baba Ram Singh

as the harbinger of the Swadeshi and Non-Cooperation movements. Shaheed-i-Azim Bhagat Singh discovered anti-imperialist overtones in the Kuka movement. Subsequently, Jawahar Lal Nehru and Babu Rajinder Prasad remembered Baba Ram Singh and Kuka Singhs as the great patriots.[2]

The British officials were the first to perceive a threat from the Kuka movement to their raj. Denzil Ibbetson, who compiled the first Census Report of 1881, incorporated a sketch of Kukas in this report which became a standardized official version and was reproduced by the Census officials and administrator scholars Sir Muhammad Latif and Sir Lepel Griffin subsequently. Sir Muhammad Latif, while writing a comprehensive *History of the Punjab: From the Remotest Antiquity to the Present Time* in 1891 included a brief note on the 'Kuka Outbreak' in the last chapter of his work. For him'the Kukas were orthodox sect of the Sikhs' founded by Baba Balak Singh and Baba Ram Singh. "Ram Singh was a man (who) possessed of considerable intellectual ability.... By degrees he acquired a great reputation among his followers for piety and sanctity".[3] Latif explained the Kuka Outbreak in terms of disorderly behaviour of the Namdhari guru's disciples and his teachings were 'more political in their nature'. "Under the guise of a religious reformer and a teacher of moral precepts, he harboured deep political designs..."[4] Sir Lepel Griffin (*Ranjit Singh* 1892) perceived organization of the Namdhari Guru and his 'fanatical disciples' as political organization. He noted that "the original movement was religious, an attempt to reform the Sikh practice and restore it to the character it possessed in the time of Govind Singh. As the sect grew in numbers, its ambition increased, till, at last, it preached a revival of theKhalsa and the downfall of the British Government". [5] Lepel Griffin was the Chief Secretary to the Punjab Government and noted the proceedings of the Kukas which 'caused a great amount of anxiety and trouble.'

The official perceptions of Kuka movement conveniently suited to the nationalist historiography. Fauja Singh wrote *Kuka Movement:*

An Important Phase in Punjab's Role in India's Struggle for Freedom in 1965. M M Ahluwalia also produced his work *Kukas-The Freedom Fighters of the Punjab* in the same year. They argued that the programme of socio-religious reforms undertaken by Baba Ram Singh was essentially a spade work for political ends. They found that the religious idiom of the traditional leaders was an effective strategy for mass-mobilization. They used archival material comprehensively and adequately for corroborating their arguments and concluded that the Kuka Sikhs were pioneers in the Indian struggle for freedom. Since then Jaswinder Singh, Bhai Nahar Singh and Kirpal Singh reiterated that the Kukas were rebels and nationalists.[6] Several Namdhari writers produced their works following the paradigm of the nationalist historiography. Prominent among them are Tara Singh Anjan, H S Hanspal, Dalip Singh, Surinder Kaur Kharal, Suwaran Singh Virk, Sawaran Singh Snehiand Jagdish Singh Waryam. They eulogize the role of the Namdhari Gurus andSikhs in national struggle profusely.[7]

Dr. Ganda Singh and Dr. Bhagat Singh refused to accept political perspective of the Kuka movement particularly its anti-British stance and nationalistic overtones. They got their articles published in *Punjab Past and Present in 1979* and raised some pertinent questions. These articles obliged the scholars including Namdhari to review their conclusions regarding the character of this movement and its impact. Nevertheless, W.H. McLeod's article "The Kukas: A Millenarian Sect of the Punjab" published in *Punjab Past and Present*, XIII-I, April 1979 added paradigm of millenarian character of the Kuka movement. He raised the status of 'Baba' Ram Singh to the *massiha* and who visualized a society free from discrimination and exploitation. For thousands of agriculturists and artisans' Baba' was liberator. Very recently, Harjot Oberoi has examined McLeod's typology of Millenarian movement and suggests that the economic conditions of the Kuka and their milieu are contestable and Kuka's motivations transgressed the economic realm and operated at the

cultural level.[8]

From the proceeding note it is clear that the main writings of the Namdhari scholars and professional historians just focus on the Kuka movement and have not given due attention to the role and status of the Namdhari Sikhs during the twentieth century Punjab. The recent two Ph.D Theses (Kuldeep Singh, 2000 and Babusha, 2012) and my three books (2010 and 2013), besides several articles, took a fresh look at the history of the Namdhari Sikhs since theinception of their movement. This essay summarizes the following perceptions: that (a) the mission of Namdhari Gurus Balak Singh and Ram Singh must be contextualized in the Sikh scriptures and traditions; (b) Namdhari Guru Ram Singh was a strong protagonist of the Khalsa order and raj; (c) a radical transformation have taken place in the demographic and socio-cultural realm of the Namdhari Sikhs of Punjab since the inception of their sect and (d) the Namdhari leadership improvised the socio-religious and administrative order of Satguru Ram Singh and introduced new institutions in the wake of new concerns and challenges.

Demographic Profile

The Namdhari Sikhs form a small religious community in Punjab. Outside Punjab, they are microscopic in Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, Delhi and Uttar Pradesh. Outside India, hundreds of their families have settled in Thailand, Australia, African countries, USA, Canada and England since the beginning of Punjabi diaspora in late nineteenth century. In and outside Punjab, they belong to agriculturist, artisan and menial castes. At present, morethan half of the Namdhari following in Punjab belong to the agriculturist castes: *Jats*, *Sainis*, *Rajputs* and *Kambojs*. The artisans comprise *Ramgarhias*, Parjapats, Chhembas, Suniaras, Nais, Julahas, Mehras and *Ramdasias/Mazhabis*. There is marginal but important segment of *Aroras* and *Khatris* whereas the *Brahmins* and *Banias* are exceptions.

This demographic status is the result of the response of the various Sikh occupational castes since late 19th century. During this period, the Jat Sikh responded to the mission of Namdhari Guru Ram Singh in a big way and their rate of conversion was 32% but in due course of time, this rate declined to 14% whereas the rate of conversion of the *Ramgarhia* Sikhs doubled i.e., from 12 to 22%. Nevertheless, throughout the period, the Jat and Ramgarhia castes maintained their numerical hegemony. The Namdhari agriculturists and artisans, by and large, belonged to the deprived section of the agrarian society of Punjab. This can be inferred from the police list of influential Kukas which states that the Kuka converts came from the 'poor Jat Sikh cultivators, *Tarkhans, Chamars and Mazhabis'*.[9] Nevertheless, the police report does not refer to the Kuka converts from the 'minor' agriculturist castes like Saini, Rajput and Kamboj. Similarly, it does not enlist the converts from Arora, Khatri and Bania castes. In the Census Report of 1881 and District Gazetteers of Rawalpindi and Ludhiana, we find references to the prominent Kukas of mercantile as well as minor agriculturist castes. For instance, the founder of Namdhari mission was Baba Balak Singh, who was Arora by caste. His followers too were Aroras and Khatris. The prominent among them was Suba Gurcharan Singh (Arora) who 'travelled all over Afghanistan, visiting Kandhar, Ghazni, Bokhara and Kabul, and met with considerable proselytizing success amongst Aroras and Suniars'. Another prominent Namdhari Arora wasBhai Kahn Singh who was nephew of Namdhari Guru Balak Singh. Among the Namdhari Khatris were Baba Jagat Singh, Baba Kanhiya Singh, Suba Kartar Singh Bedi, Sodhi Hira Singh and Sardar Lehna Singh.[10]

Majority of the agriculturists under the colonial rule suffered in terms of mortgaging their landholdings to the *sahukars* (moneylanders) for paying land revenue in cash and meeting their social requirements. Consequently, the Namdhari agriculturists too (like their counterparts) went under debt. They further suffered from the agrarian legislation of the colonial rulers. Similarly, the artisan and menial castes were too victims of this legislation. Moreover, both

agriculturists and non-agriculturalists were victims of social evils, customs of *sati* (a ritual of wife-burning on husband's pyre), female infanticideand dowry. As we shall note, Namdhari Guru Ram Singh and his successors addressed to the socio-economic problems of their followers belonging tothese occupational castes. However, effects of colonial agrarian legislation on these followers were primary factors which determined the rate of their conversion to the Namdhari mission. As a result, their numerical strength, as noted above, varied from time to time.

The partition of Punjab in 1947 radically transformed the demography of the Namdhari community. Thousands of Namdhari agriculturists and artisans were forced to quit their native villages and towns of the West Punjab (Pakistan) and migrate and resettle in the villages and towns of the East Punjab(India). More than 80% of the Namdhari migrants came from District Sialkot. The patterns of their migration and settlement were not different from their counterparts- Hindus and Sikhs. They were victims of communal violence, financial and physical hardships. However, it was Namdhari Guru Partap Singh who played an important role in the processes of resettlement of these migrants. He purchased thousands of acres of land in the present District of Sirsa (Haryana), developed a headquarters known as Jiwan Nagar, got special permission from the then Rehabilitation Commissioner to allow Namdhari migrants to settle there and distributed landholdings to the agriculturists as well as artisans. Similarly, he distributed landholdings to his followers in Bir Bhamarsi, District Patiala. He also prevailed upon the then ruler of Mandi town (Himachal Pardesh) to allow his followers, mostly Khatri and Aroras, to stay in this town permanently. Similarly, he prevailed upon the Deputy Commissioner of Kapurthala to assign small plots in Bhulath for his migrant followers. Nevertheless, the resettlement of the Namdhari agriculturists in the Districts of Hoshiarpur, Gurdaspur, Kapurthala, Fatehgarh Sahib and Ferozepur was motivated by the spirit of *bhaichara* and availability of agriculture land. The official policy of group-settlement was too

complimentary to their pattern of rehabilitation.[11] Similarly, the pattern of resettlement of migrant artisan families was marked by the spirit of *bhaichara* (caste brotherhood) religious brotherhood and availability of sources of livelihood. They were helped by their relatives and *gurbhais* (co-religionists) who lived in the urban centres of the East Punjab. Moreover, the official policy of building camps and towns for these migrant families helped the migrant Namdhari families to come together and live in the same localities. Preet Nagar in Jalandhar city is an example of this pattern of re-settlement.

The creation of Indo-Pakistan border (1947), the militant movement in the last quarter of twentieth century and rural to urban migration for better urban facilities and job avenues were other major variables which formed Namdhari nucleus in the cities of Amritsar, Gurdaspur, Jalandhar and Ludhiana. The creation of Indo-Pakistan border produced two-types of problems for the artisans. First was the security problem. The anti-social elements like thieves and smugglers frequently crossed the border for transporting goods including intoxicants and live-stock. They also created communal violence. Moreover, two Indo-Pakistan Wars (1965 and 1971) further created a sense of insecurity and defused initiatives for the trade and industrial developments. Secondly, the Indo-Pakistan border destroyed prospectus of development of its towns. Consequently, like their counterparts, the Namdhari businessmen and artisans too left their native places and resettled in the cities of Amritsar, Jalandhar and Ludhiana.[12]

The militant movement in the last quarter of twentieth century became a major catalyst of rural to urban migration. The people, irrespective of their caste and creed affiliations, lived under the dread of terrorists when they indulged in threats, abductions, extortions and rapes. Situation took the worst turn when the leaders of terrorist outfits vied with one another to glorify their so-called achievements. The quick way of self-adulation was sought through the infliction of punishment to the *mukhbars* (informers) and *dokhis* (enemies) of the

Panth and Khalistan. For the Khalistanis, the Namdhari Sikhs like the Nirankaris were too *Panth dokhis* (enemies of the community) as they indulged in *manmat* (self-orientation) and worshiped *dehdhari guru* (embodied guru) and performed *ardas* (supplication) in the name of twelfth guru. Several Namdhari *mahants* (priests) and leaders (*subas* and *pardhans*) became victims of assaults of terrorists. In the wake of this threat, several Namdhari families migrated to those urban centres where they could earn their livelihood and settle permanently.[13]

In the normal times too, the Namdhari agriculturists and artisans continueto migrate to the urban centres for availing the civic facilities and job avenues. Among the artisans, the percentage of migration of the Namdhari Ramgarhias is higher as they get skilled or semi-skilled jobs in the industrial towns. Some of them have established their own manufacturing units and opened show- rooms. Similarly, the entrepreneur Namdhari agriculturists (mainly Jats) too have moved to the urban centres and started their own business of transportation, manufacturing units and commission agents. They are followed by the small and marginal farmers. They have acquired higher and technical education and professional jobs or have set up small manufacturing units. As a result of this migration the concentrations of the Namdhari Sikhs can also be seen in several towns and cities of Punjab.

Consolidation and Anti-Colonial Struggle

The founder of Namdhari community was Baba Balak Singh (1785-1862) whorevived the Sikh tradition of monotheism and emphasized *nam-simran,* rejecting all forms of ritualism and exhorting the man to worship God alone. He asked his followers that they should offer *prasad* (sacred food) of rupee one and four *annas* in the name of God. He instructed his followers to take bath twice a day; to keep one small symbolic sword in the *pagri;* earn livelihood by honest means and eat food cooked only by the *Gursikhs.* He further asked them to

lead ethical life and avoid indulgences. He prohibited theuse of meat, tobacco and liquor. He also started *anand riti*.[14]

The impact of his mission was evidently considerable. As per Namdhari tradition, he administered *gur-mantar* to Ram Singh and appointed him as his successor in one of the gatherings held at Hazro. However, this version has been contested by the official account which states that there were three claimants namely Lal Singh, Kahn Singh and Ram Singh. According to this version, Lal Singh stayed back at Hazro whereas Kahn Singh and Ram Singh shifted to Amritsar and village Bhaini Ararian respectively.[15]

However, Namdhari Guru Ram Singh extended the scope of teachings of his spiritual predecessor and revived the Khalsa traditions. In all probability, he received these traditions from the rahit-namas of 18th and 19th centuries but gave primacy to the teachings of Granth Sahib and Dasam Granth. For the socio-political mission, he referred to the Prem Sumarag and Sakhi literature.[16] According to Namdhari tradition, he organized a congregation on the day of Baisakhi of 1857 A.D. and administered *amrit* (nector) of *khande-ki-pahul* (initiation by double edged sword) to five Sikhs. He unfurled the flag of Sant Khalsa which was triangular in shape and white in colour.[17] Kahn SinghNihang of village Chak, Malerkotala State; Labh Singh Ragi of Amritsar;Atma Singh of Alo Muhar village, District Sialkot; Bhai Naina Singh Wariyah,Amritsar District and Sudh Singh of village Durgapur, District Jalandhar were first to be initiated into the order of Sant Khalsa. Afterwards several people from the congregation took *amrit*.[18] The Namdhari tradition claims that spiritual master Ram Singh administered *khande-di-pahul* to the women which was an exceptional ritual in the mid-19th century Punjab.

The Namdhari Guru, in all probability, got the concept of Sant Khalsa fromPrem Sumarag. In the beginning of its first Chapter, this granth mentions that with Akal Purakh's blessings, the Sant Khalsa

would be formed in the age of *Kalyuga*. The granth also mentions the date and time of its formation. It furthermentions that in the age of *Kalyuga,* a messenger of Akal Purakh would appearin the form of human being for destroying the enemies of the Panth and false gurus on the one hand and removing the ignorance of the people and reaffirming their faith in Akal Purakh on the other. The Sant Khalsa would usher an era of *Satjug*.[19] The word Satjug (*Sat* + *Yuga*) signifies a period of time when righteousness, compassion and austerity were observed by the people. Most probably Ram Singh wanted to revive that period. For the Sant Khalsa, he introduced a strict code of discipline. Accordingly, they were required to lead pure and clean lives attuned to the Name of God; develop regular and disciplined habits. They were to rise at 3.00 a.m., brush their teeth, bathe and recite the Name of God, especially the *Chandi di Var* - Guru Gobind Singh's composition.[20] Recitation of Chandi di Var was invoke to inculcate themartial spirit among the members of the Sant Khalsa so that they could fight against tyranny. He laid down a specific mode of reciting Chandi da Path in an assembly which lasted for two to three days.[21] Moreover, he also made an arrangement for the training of young Sant Khalsa in the use of *gadka,* horse- riding and weapons. Already distinct in physical appearance, he wished that the Sant Khalsa should feel as if they were 'the eclectic', while others were *mlechh,* unclean. For that matter, he taught them the virtues of purity and truth.He ensured that 'on initiation all vices are supposed to be foresworn, such as lying, stealing, drinking, adultery etc.' The Panchayat system was revived for punishing the offenders and bringing them back to the path of religious purity.'[22]

Since the formation of Sant Khalsa, the Namdhari followers multiplied intothousands and spread over to villages and towns of *Malwa*, *Doaba* and *Majha* regions. The Namdhari Guru realized that he should have a team of deputies and local leaders to carry on his missionary work. In the initial stage, he formed a council comprising six members and assigned the task of propagationto them in their respective areas: Jawahar Singh in Amritsar, Kahn Singh in Nabha,

Patiala and Sangrur, Sahib Singh and Brahama Singh in the Majha region; Sudh Singh and Lakha Singh in Doaba.[23] Later on, he evolved Suba- system appointing seventeen deputies in different areas of Punjab. In each district there was one suba who coordinated the work of the local functionaries. Next to the subas were *naib-subas* (deputies), *jathedars* (leaders of the groups) and *granthis* (scripture readers).[24]

Ram Singh undertook the task of *gurmat* (guru's message) propagation. Herevived the Sikh tradition of *Kirtan* (singing praise of God). He wished that through the kirtan his followers should have personal experience of heavenly joy and spiritual ecstasy. Some of his followers while reciting the name of Godlost control over their senses and emitted shrieks, their turbans fell off. It was from this state of religious and ecstatic frenzy that they came to be known as Kukas - shriekers. These Kukas recited *shabad* (hymns) on the top of their voices accompanied by *dholaks* and *chhehane*.[25] He employed professional singers (*ragis* and *dhadi Jathas*). These *jathas* were deployed in the different areas: the ragi jatha of Bhai Ditu and Bhai Fakira in District Sailkot, ragi-jatha of Bhai Prem Singh and Bhai Kirpal Singh in Bhadaur, Malwa, ragi-jatha of Bhai Tara Singh and Bhai Pali (of Attari, Amritsar) in Majha area and ragi- jatha of Bhai Suba Singh in Doaba area. They sang the songs of bravery of the Sikh heroes in the religious congregations. To keep these ragis and dhadis under discipline, Namdhari Guru instructed his *sangat* to observe austerity in extending hospitality to them. The singing jathas were given food and Rs 1/- for other expenses.[26] Besides, he revived the tradition of reading and reciting gurbani and performing *bhog* (closing ritual of recitation of scripture) of the Adi-Granth. For instance, in most of the existing *dharamsalas* (religious places), the *mahants* and *pujaris* (priests), *bhais* (a learned Sikh) and granthis neither recited gurbani in the morning or evening nor performed bhog of Adi- Granth. He was pained to know that the sacred Sikh scriptures were kept in thealmiras. He got the copies of Adi-Granth printed and made them available to his followers. He established and

repaired the old dharamsalas.

Namdhari Guru Ram Singh undertook extensive tours of villages and towns of Punjab for reaching straight to the people, understanding theirproblems and aspirations and disseminating the programme of social reforms.In these tours, he was accompanied by his troupe comprising 100 to 500followers including ragis, granthis and *parcharaks* (preachers). Wherever hewent, the local Namdhari *sangat* (congregation) made arrangements for holding religious congregations (*diwans* and *hollas*). He himself held religious discourses and the ragis and granthis recited gurbani and performed kirtan.Besides, he undertook the pilgrimages of the following places HarmandirSahib, Amritsar; Nankana Sahib; Gurdwaras at Muktsar and Anandpur Sahib. Most probably, Namdhari Guru was the first religious leader who challengedthe vested interests of the priestly class comprising Mahants and Pujaris whowere in possession of historical gurdwaras. He found that the custodians of*devidvars, shivdvaras* and *mandirs* (Hindu worshipping places) were parasites who made these places means of extortion. His staunch followers, as the British officials noted, held these custodians and places in contempt. Being thedevotee of Akal Purakh, he found that the idols and idol worship were insult to God.[27] Translating his belief into practice, his staunch followers (Kukas) started desecrating and demolishing the sacred places of the Hindus andMuslims alike. One of such sacred places of the Hindus was located betweenthe village of Chuhar Bhaini and Chote Borshu in District Ferozepur. TheKuka zealots Waryam Singh, Fateh Singh and Jaimal Singh destroyed thisplace on September 1, 1866.[28] Similarly, the Kukas (*Mazhabis*) destroyedtwenty seven graves, located at village Khatri Kose. When these Kukas weredestroying these graves, the villagers protested and resisted Kukas' action. As a result, violent clashes took place injuring relatives and friends to whom thesegraves belonged.[29] The British Government was alarmed of such incidents and arrested these Kukas. They were put on trial and awarded with various punishments. It seems that Kukas' intention was to eliminate fear

and superstitions prevalent among the common people. They wanted to tell the rural population that there was no supernatural power which could harm them.[30] The incident of destruction of graves and tombs in the day lightprojected the heroic image of the Kukas. They conveyed the message to the people that worship of graves and tombs was futile and useless. Nevertheless, these acts were fraught with dangerous implications.

Namdhari Guru and his followers also confronted the Mahants and Pujaris who were in possession of historical gurdwaras. His confrontation with the priests of Gurdwara Keshgarh Sahib brought basic religious differences to the forefront. The priests alleged that Namdhari Guru was not *gurmukh* (guru's Sikh). They argued that that (a) he set himself as a Guru, (b) he whispered a *mantar* (mystic word) in the ear of a convert whereas practice was to administer *amrit*, (c) he made a convert to repeat *Janam Guru* Hazro *Aur Basi Guru Bhaini* whereas the actual practice was that *Janam Guru Patna Aur Basi Guru Anandpur* and (d) Kukas' turbans fell off on their shoulders in the stateof frenzy in the presence of Guru Granth Sahib. It was a Sufi not Sikh practice.The Namdhari Guru evaded to answer his deviation of the Sikh tradition and said that pujaris failed to appreciate his religious reforms and counter charged them for their indulgences like drinking, lying, and female infanticide etc. He further alleged that the priestly class was creating rifts in the Panth itself. He reiterated that he was a servant of God and revived the maryada (code of conduct) of tenth Guru. He told the priestly class that it was he who inspired hundreds of people to read and recite gurbani.[31]

The Namdhari Guru could see the reason for which the wealthy and priestly classes were opposed to his followers. He noted that right from Guru period onward there had been a contradiction between the rich and poor people. The latter aspired for the spiritual quest whereas the former perceived a threat from the poor. He quoted Guru Nanak's verse in this context. If his contemporary rich people opposed the Namdhari Sikhs, it was not a surprise tohim. He

said that they were the cursed people and crying foul was their habit.[32]He used the term *dhanaad* (wealthy) for the rulers comprising British and landed aristocracy. The latter submitted a memorandum to the then Lieutenant Governor, Punjab and extended their full support to the British and asked it to crush the wicked sect of the Kukas. However, he noted that this ruling class did not appreciate the fact that the Namdhari Sikhs were Guru Gobind Singh's creation. If the Namdhari Sikhs had made successful strives, it was due to Guru's grace. In contrast to the behavior of the rulers, the Namdhari Sikhs alone performed *akhand paths* (continuous reading of Guru Granth Sahib) and mediated on the name of God.[33]

To encounter the temporal might of the Sodhis, Bedis, Mahants and Pujaris, the Namdhari Guru Ram Singh asserted that his Sant Khalsa was the actual creation of Guru Gobind Singh and his own mission was divine mission.

Giani Gian Singh, a Nirmala scholar, imagined that Balak Singh and Ram Singh were the messengers of God and sent to purify the degenerated human- beings. Their appearance brought an immense relief to the common people. Giani Gian Singh further imagined that Ram Singh was the incarnation of Guru Gobind Singh and dedicated to the liberation of mankind. The Tenth Master sent him to re-unite the human-beings with Almighty and liberate them from their temporal stranglehold and social evils. Moreover, Giani Gian Singh makes us believe that the contemporary traditional Sikh leaders represented thecause of the rich people and used the religious places for their vested interests whereas he (Namdhari Guru Ram Singh) brought out the contradictions between the temporal and spiritual lords. He asserted that the struggle between two lords was going on since Guru Nanak Dev's times. The temporal lords were represented by Malik Bhago whereas Guru Nanak Dev stood with Bhai Lalo. The Namdhari Sikhs did not 'own an allegiance to the temples, the places of pilgrimage, the Purans, the *Sadhus* (Saints) or *Brahmins* and Pujaris.'[34]

Namdhari Guru Ram Singh addressed to the social problems of his followers. He attacked infanticide, dowry and widow-burning boldly as they became victims of these evils. Unable to afford expenses of dowry, they killed daughters. Several of them remained singles which often generated moral laxity. He noted that the Khalsa of Lahore Kingdom was the victim of prostitution and sodomy. He thought that the compulsory marriages could reduce the ignominious living or remove the social stigma. He made taboo for the Namdhari congregation to keep itself away from the morally depraved persons. He further made taboo for the Namdhari Sikhs not to remain singles. With the introduction of *anand-riti* and mass-marriages without dowry it became easier for his Sikhs to go for a married life. In addressing to these followers, he was inspired by the Khalsa rahit of 18th century.[35]

Namdhari Guru Ram Singh did not accept the British rule and its institutions. He instructed his followers not to join the service of the British government nor send their children to government schools nor use courts of law, foreign goods and the government postal services.[36] Rather he suggested them to have their own arrangements for all these things.[37]

Political overtones of his message were read by the British officials when a new version of *Sau-Sakhi* (hundred legends) was circulated prophesying the 'rebirth of Guru Gobind Singh in the person of Ram Singh... Who would resurrect the Khalsa, drive the English out of Hindustan and establish a new Sikh dynasty...'.[38] However, sensing danger in the activities of the Namdhari Guru, the British officials served a notice forbidding him to leave his village Bhaini. He lived under surveillance for four years and was set free in 1867 as the British official did not get any concrete evidence for his 'treason'.[39]

After his release, Namdhari Guru revived his activities to revitalise his followers. He undertook tours to the historical places of the Sikhs,

first to Anandpur Sahib and then to Amritsar. On the *Dussehra* festival in the autumn of 1867, he visited Amritsar with nearly 3,500 followers.[40] They thronged in thousands at Bhaini in the same year. Efforts were also made to establish friendly relations with foreign powers and to secure their aid. With positive response from Maharaja Ranbir Singh, the ruler of Kashmir, some Namdharis were sent there for military training and a Kuka regiment was raised under the command of Hira Singh. Besides, a deputation under Kahn Singh was also sentto Nepal to get help in arms, men and money.[41]

Thus the clash with the British government became more or less inevitable and the issue of cow-slaughter precipitated the matter. The British officials had lifted the ban on cow-slaughter and permitted the Muslim butchers to open their slaughter houses. Within a short time, beef-selling and kine-leather became a trade in most of the towns of the province. This seriously offended the religious sentiments of the Hindus and the Sikhs, especially when beef was sold in the streets of the holy city of Amritsar. They protested but officials did not bother to stop the kine-killing. The Namdharis could no longer restrain their anger as the cow was an object of veneration and protection for them. Some of them made several raids on the Muslim butchers at various places in Amritsar and Malerkotla in the Ludhiana district in 1871-72.[42] In the clashes, several butchers were killed. This gave a much-awaited opportunity to the government to crush the Namdharis. Several of them were blasted off by cannons or hanged or awarded long imprisonments. Baba Ram Singh and a few other popular Kukas were deported.[43]

The state-repression did not restrain the anti-government activities of the Kukas. They made an attempt to procure arms from abroad. The Kuka leaders also reorganized their followers and tried to provoke the people by circulating the *sakhis*, legend, to spread the ideas of the return of Baba Ram Singh from abroad; of the rise of Muhammadan Chief in the North-West of India and Russian help against the British. Though there was no mass response to these

sakhis they at least inspired the Kukas and raised their hopes regarding the fall of the British rule and the ultimate establishment of the Khalsa raj.[44]

Concurrently, with the exertions of Kukas for the restoration the Khalsa raj,came the proclamation of ex-Maharaja Dalip Singh as the sovereign of theSikh 'nation'.[45] In 1886, he sailed for India and news of his journey generated a great excitement among the Punjabis. The Kukas believed that Ram Singh's spirit had entered into Dalip Singh and their deputation reached Bombay to greet him. But the British government rightly foresaw the danger of his arrival in the Punjab and detained him at Aden. However, determined in his resolve against the British, the ex-Maharaja reached Russia in 1887.[46] Meanwhile, rumours were spread in the Punjab that Suba Bishan Singh had joined Dalip Singh in Russia and that the Maharaja was now arranging assistance for the invasion of the Punjab.[47]

From Russia, Dalip Singh made appeals to the Sikh Sardars and masses to rise against the British. Among the Sardars who responded favourably to his appeals was Sardar Thakur Singh Sandhanwalia, a collateral of MaharajaRanjit Singh. Dissatisfied and dejected with the British he took up Dalip Singh's cause.[48] It is said that he contacted Sikh and Rajput soldiers in the British armies and got their oath of allegiance to the Maharaja. It is further believed that he succeeded in getting the promise of armed help to the Sikhs and other rajas, in case of battle against the British government.[49]

However, Kukas' plans to secure aid from other sources turned out to be a futile exercise. The Maharaja of Kashmir recruited the Kukas to get a chanceof expressing his loyalty to the British by dismissing them as soon as the latter wanted. Similarly, the ruler of Nepal had actually no sympathy with the Kukas' cause. Like the Maharaja of Kashmir, he was also thinking to use Kukas' as political lever in dealing with the British. The Russians too did not want to annoy the British either by helping the Kukas or Dalip Singh.[50] Disillusioned

Maharaja left Russia for Europe in 1888 and died in exile inParis on October 22, 1893. His associate Thakur Singh Sandhanwalia had already been arrested by the British in 1887 and died all of a sudden on August18, 1887. With his death, all plans of organising anti-British forces were given up.[51]

Namdhari-Hindu Relations

In early years of 20th century, political scenario changed in favour of NamdhariSikhs. 'Satguru' Partap Singh (1906-1959) resolved to shed of sectarian ideology of his predecessors and identify the Namdhari Sikhs with the nationalist forces like Congress and Socialists. He also contemplated on integrating the Namdhari Sikhs with the world of the Hindus. Primary reasons for his resolve were that the Namdhari Sikhs were ostracized by the Singh Sabha leaders and activists. The definition of Sikh evolved by this leadership excluded the Namdhari Sikhs from the main Sikh stream. This definitionimplied that a Sikh was a person who believed in the ten Sikh Gurus and Guru Granth Sahib whereas the Namdhari Sikhs believed in the continuity of embodied guru and claimed that Baba Balak Singh and Baba Ram Singh were eleventh and twelfth Sikh Gurus respectively. They performed their supplications in the names of these two Gurus on all occasions. Consequently, the Namdhari Sikhs were further excluded from the managements of the Sikh shrines when the Gurdwara Act 1925 incorporated this definition in its provisions.

The Satjug, the spokesman of the Namdhari community, defined the role of the Namdhari Sikhs in the national perspective. It reminded them that since 'Satguru' Ram Singh had already set the practice of observing *swadeshi* and boycotting British courts, administrative services and educational institutions etc, therefore, they should participate in the Non-Cooperation Movement launched by Mahatma Gandhi.[52] Maharaj Gurdial Singh and Sant NidhanSingh Alam participated in the political conferences organised by the Congress. They were members of its committee which drafted

resolutions. In one of such resolutions, Sant Nidhan Singh Alam argued that only thosepeople could take the credit of promoting *swaraj* who themselves participated in the bonefire of imported clothes.[53] For developing a rapport with Congress, Maharaj Nihal Singh, the younger brother of Namdhari Guru Partap Singh, participated in the proceedings of Lahore Congress Session (1929). Mata Jiwan Kaur, mother of the Namdhari Guru, was in charge of the community kitchen which served food to the delegates. Similarly, the Namdhari Sikhs participated in the Civil Disobedience Movement (1930). Maharaj Nihal Singh was deputed by the Congress to implement the programme of this movement in Punjab. He, along with a few other Kukas, courted arrest during the course of this movement. The Namdhari Sikhs also formed the Kuka Congress Dal to take part in the Congress movement against the British.[54] Subsequently, the Congress leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru and Rajinder Prasad visited Bhaini Sahib headquarters and eulogized the sacrifices made by the Kuka Sikhs during the Kuka Movement. Eventually the Congress and Namdhari Sikhs became allies in the national politics.

Simultaneously, for ending the social exclusion of the Namdhari Sikhs, Satjug advocated that they should identify themselves with the Hindus. It argued that there were no theological differences between Hinduism and Sikhism. It emphatically stated that the Sikhs were Hindus. Similar theologicalposition was taken and advocated by the Udasi and Nrimala Sikhs. Inder Singh Chakarvarti was a leading Namdhari protagonist this theory. He knew that espousing popular Sikh theory of incarnation could build up philosophical linkages with the Hindus. Therefore, he reiterated that the Sikh Gurus were *avtars* (incarnations) and Akal Purakh sent them to this world to liberate the suffering humanity. According to Sanatanist Hindu philosophy, *Ishvar* is formless and universal who has had been appearing on the earth in His specificform which is the manifestation of His *yog-maya.* The Vedic literature, especially Puranic-literature, is related to with the avtar-episodes. The Shavalite Puranic literature

refers to the several incarnations of Bhagwan Shankar. The Vaishnavite Puranas also refer to several incarnations of Vishnu. Important among these incarnations are Matrya, Kuram, Varah, Nirsinh (inRisMh), Vaman, Purshuram, Ram, Krishan, Budh and Kalaki. BhagvatPurans mention twenty-two incarnations of Vishnu. One of the important attributes of incarnations of Vishnu is that they appear on the earth to save *dharma* (religion) from being supplanted by *adharma* (irreligiousness). According to Bhagvad Geeta, Sri Krishan addressed Arjun and told him that whenever dharma was in danger, Vishnu appeared in the human form to save dharma.[55]

Inder Singh Chakarvarti argued that the ten Sikh Gurus were avtars who appeared on the earth to protect *Vedic Dharam.* Quoting Guru Nanak, he said that he protected *Vedic Dharam* in terms of showing real path to those people who were corrupt and had forgotten God's name. He argued that Guru Nanak exhorted them to meditate on the name of God and observe truth, continence and mercy. Continuing the Sikh tradition of protecting Hindu religion, Guru Tegh Bahadur laid down his life for the sake of *tilak-janju* (sacred thread). His *kurbani* (sacrifice) instilled a spirit of sacrifice among the dead Hindu race. Chakarvarti cited couplets of *Sri Guru Partap Suraj* and *Panth Prakash* in this context. Kashmiri Pandits pleaded with Guru Tegh Bahadur that if Hindus were eliminated then who would perform *yag-havan.*[56] Guru Tegh Bahadur acceded their request and set out from Anandpur on 11 July, 1675 and was executed on 11 November, 1675.[57] Consequently, the Hindus continued to perform *havan-yag*. For corroborating his version of execution of Guru Tegh Bahadur, Chakarvarti cited Guru Gobind Singh's writing *Bachitra Natak* as a testimony of his father's execution [58]

He protected their *tilak* and *janeu;*
In this age of darkness, he performed a grand deed;He made the supreme sacrifice for the sake of faith.He gave his head, but uttered not a groan.

This martyrdom he endured to uphold righteousness He gave his head, but displayed not his charisma…"

Taking a leap forward in this context, Guru Gobind Singh created Khalsa Panth which was to work as the volunteer corps of Hindu race. Guru took this initiative because the Hindus had lost a sense of pride and self-respect. They were helpless even to defend the honour of their wives and daughters.[59]

For further substantiating his theory of socio-cultural Hindu-Sikh commonality, Chakarvarti profusely quoted couplets from the Adi-Granth, works of Guru Gobind Singh, Bhai Gurdas (of Behlo) and Bhai Santokh Singh. Quoting Bhai Gurdas, Chakarvarti said that Guru Gobind Singh performed *Yagya* for the revival of Hindu race. Chakarvarti further said that Guru Gobind Singh himself cited some couplets in the presence of Pandit Kesho Das for appreciating the relevance of performing the ritual of *havan*.[60] Kesho Das was a *tantrika* (practitioner of magical techniques) of Varanasi. He came to Anandpur and claimed that if adequate provisions were made available to him he could make the Goddess Durga manifest. For months he tried his best but failed to demonstrate the appearance of Durga. On his disappearance, Guru Gobind Singh himself performed *havan*. Moreover, Chakarvarti cited Giani Gian Singh for telling the reader that Guru Gobind Singh himself believed in the theory of incarnation and recognised the relevance of performing *yag-hom.* Performance of this ritual could dispel ignorance and evil-spirits. It could also bestow spiritual strength and relieve of any crisis. Besides, it could also instill a spirit of chivalry and fearlessness in the people. Above all, it was the havan which produced *kirpan* (sword) for eliminating the devils. The *devatas* (angels) used the kirpan for defeating *rakhash* (demons).[61]

The Hindu leaders responded to the Namdhari ideology in 1920s. Bhai Parmanand, a Hindu nationalist, wrote a small article for the

Namdhari periodical, the Satjug. The article was published under the title "Satguru Ram Singh Ji" for its *Basant Ank* (issue) of 1928, he argued that the movement founded by Satguru Ram Singh was religious in its character but was transformed into a political one. Satguru Ram Singh taught the Indian people that if they wanted to attain freedom they should learn to lay down their lives. They should lead a simple life and control their worldly desires. Such a life- style was pre-requisite for attaining freedom. Perceiving the political character of Guru Ram Singh's movement, Bhai Parmanand argued that it was he who evolved the concept of non-cooperation asking the people to boycott the British courts and goods. Satguru preached this concept in those times when English education was yet to be started. He was forerunner of Mahatma Gandhi in launching the Non-Cooperation movement.[62]

Swami Swantarta Nand, another Arya Samajist leader of Guru Dat BhawanLahore, found similarities in the programmes of Arya Samaj and Namdhari Sikhs. Swami said that both believed in the relevance of living Guru who could dispel ignorance of his followers. He argued that a scripture could not speak itself or hold a discourse or show the real path to the followers. It wasthe living guru who could alone interpret a scripture; share the mystical experience and lead to an enlightened path etc. It is for this reason that Guru Ram Singh assumed the role of an embodied guru. He further argued that the Arya Samajists and Namdhari Sikhs too performed havan and used *ghee* for *ahuti* liberally; were vegetarians and used *satwahik* food; advocated that the marriageable age of a girl should not be less than 15 years. Moreover, both were protagonists of swadeshi goods; advocated the boycott of the British courts and settle their disputes locally.[63]

The Swami disclosed that Inder Singh Chakarvarti, Nidhan Singh Alamand Mangal Singh approached him to write this article. Infact, the Hindu leaders had larger religious, cultural and political interests to respond to thecall of the Namdhari Sikhs. Being the

ideologues of the Arya Samaj and HinduMahasabha,[64] they believed that the Sikhs were an integral part of the Hindus. In early 20th century, they wanted to construct Hindu Rashtra and its expansionin terms of bringing non-Muslims into the fold of the Hindu organisation. The Vedic interpretation of Sikhism of the Namdhari Sikhs conveniently suited the Hindu leaders. They were quick to eulogize Namdhari Sikhs as patriots and nationalists. They took pride in telling the Namdhari Sikhs that Guru Ram Singh was harbinger of the freedom struggle in Punjab.

The implications of accepting ideological position of the Arya Samajists and subsequently the Rashtryia Swayamsewak Sangh by the Namdhari Sikhs had some serious implications for the Sikh community. First and foremost was that it negated the reiteration of separate Sikh identity by the Singh Sabha scholars. It was on the premise of this identity that the Sikh leadership could get political and constitutional rights for the Sikh community. In the wake of constitutional developments (Simon Commission, Nehru Report and Communal Award) in late 1920's and early 1930, Sikh leadership of theShiromani Akali Dal, Central Sikh League and Chief Khalsa Diwan was struggling to increase the percentage of its communal representation on the constitutional bodies. In choosing pragmatic politics, the Namdhari leadership put itself on the wrong side of the situation. Declaring Sikhs as Hindus, the Namdhari leadership alienated its followers from the Sikh community. However, the threat of political hegemony of the Muslims after the announcement of the Communal Award was so comprehensive that Guru Partap Singh organised the Guru Nanak Leva Sarb Sampardai Conference for strengthening Sikh communal solidarity in 1934.

Going a step forward in the process of cultural fusion with the Hindu organizations, the Namdhari Sikhs accepted the concept of Hindu Rashtra advocated by the Rashtrya Swayamsevak Sangh.[65] They were fascinated by the propagation of this concept by V.D. Savarkar in 1937 who was elected President of the Hindu Mahasabha.

He used the 'occasion of his presidential address in 1937 and then in 1938 to become the first Indian to pronounce that 'there are two nations in the main: the Hindus and the Moslems in India', pre- dating Jinnah's 1939 statement of the two nation-theory. When Savarkar visited Punjab in May 1938, the Satjug asked the Namdhari Sikhs to accord a warm welcome to him. Savarkar addressed the Sikh sangat in Ram Bagh, Amritsar on 12 May 1938 and stated that the Sikhs were sons of Guru Gobind Singh and he himself was son of Shivaji. The Hindus and Sikhs were inseparable 'cousins' who liberated India from Muslim rule. The Namdhari Sikhs' believed that Muhammad Ali Jinnah was determined to establish Muslim Raj in India and destroy Indian unity.[66] Satjug reiterated the RSS doctrine codified by the M.S. Golwalkar who "declared that if the minority demands were accepted, 'Hindu National life runs the risk of being shattered".[67] Golwalker perceived the Muslims as 'inveterate enemies' and wrote that the 'Hindus were at war with at once with the Muslims on the one hand and British on the other'.[68]

The Sikhs and Hindus were forced to take collective stand against the Lahore Resolution passed by the All India Muslim League in 1940. The resolution stated "that no constitutional plan would be workable in this countryor be acceptable to the Muslims unless it is designed on the following basic principle, namely, the geographically contiguous units are demarcated into regions which should be so constituted, with such territorial adjustments as may be necessary, that the areas in which the Muslims are numerically in a majority as the Northwestern and Eastern Zones of India should be grouped to constitute 'Independent states,' in which the constituent units should be autonomous and sovereign."[69] Disturbed over the implication of this resolution, the Hindus and the Sikhs organised their joint conferences in the important towns like Amritsar and Lahore. Master Tara Singh and Dr. Gokal Chand Narang were authorized to form a working committee of these conferences for drafting resolutions. Namdhari Guru Partap Singh was special invitee to these conferences. Emphasizing the Hindu-Sikh unity, he said that those

who preached separatism between Hindus and the Sikhs did neither understand Hinduism nor Sikhism. He further stated that at no stage of the history of the great Sikh religion, the Sikhs were separate from the Hindus. The division between the Hindus and the Sikhs was created to suit the politics of colonial government. "He pointed out that how the great Gurus stood for theprotection of the Brahmins and the cow; the learned and the meek; and how the Sikhs and Hindus were the products of the one culture and one civilization. There may be a difference here or there in the customs but essentially and basically their rites and customs were the same".[70]

The Namdhari Sikhs continued their socio-cultural discourse with the Hindu organisations in the post-independence period. They paid homage to the sacred places of Hindus and participated in the Hindu rituals. Guru Partap Singh allowed his followers to attend functions of the Hindu organizations likeVishav Hindu Parishad.[71] Thus the construction of the common cultural heritage helped the Namdhari Sikhs to identify themselves with the Hindu brotherhood.

Namdharis in the Post Independent Period

In the post-independence period, the politics of Namdhari Sikhs were essentially guided by the issues and challenges which confronted their community from time to time. However, they did not overlook the national andsecular concerns while dealing with the political parties. They stood for "a commitment to political and economic independence, modern economic development, the ending the inequality, oppression and domination in all forms" and "promotion of the processes of nation-in-the-making on the basis of joyous acceptance of the diversity".[72] They believed that the remembering the sacrifices of the Indian nationalists and revolutionaries could play an important role in the process of the national integration which was badlyfractured by the Partition of Punjab and communal violence. In his religious discourses, Namdhari Guru Jagjit Singh often reminded his followers that it was their moral

obligation to carry on the legacy of the national struggle. He interacted with the Indian nationalists and revolutionaries on number of occasions. He remembered the teachings of his father Satguru Partap Singh who thought that it was his moral and religious obligation to take care of the Indian nationalists and revolutionaries. Namdhari Guru Jagjit Singh fulfilled the obligation of his father. During the early years of his pontification, he met some old revolutionaries who were in distress. In his religious discourses, he cited the example of Baba Sohan Singh Bhakna who stayed at Bhaini Sahib forsome time. In a conversation with Bhakna, the Namdhari Guru found that Bhakna was quite perturbed to see poverty and hunger in the society. Both of them felt as if the dream of worthwhile living society had been shattered.[73]

The Namdhari Sikhs responded to the electoral politics as early as 1952. Namdhari candidate Atma Singh contested Lok Sabha elections on Congress ticket from Sirsa-Fazilka constituency but lost it. From 1952 to 1957, the Namdhari leaders prevailed upon the Congress to nominate them as the members of Upper House of the Punjab Vidhan Sabha. Their efforts bore the fruit. Sahib Singh Mann was nominated its member from 1952 to 1957. Similarly, Maharaja Nihal Singh was nominated by the Congress as the member of the Rajya Sabha (1962-67). The Namdhari representationfacilitated the task of rehabilitation of the Namdhari Sikhs in the Sirsa district. However, the emergence of the Namdhari concentrations in this district was not liked by the local Congress leaders like Devi Lal. They apprehended that the Namdhari clout in the electoral politics would be difficult to manage in their favour as it would increase the political weightage of the Namdhari Guru. For similar electoral considerations, Partap Singh Kairon, the then Chief Minister, Punjab Government, remained averse to Namdhari Sikhs. For some time, the Namdhari Darbar was forced to revise its pro-Congress stand. However, when Satguru Jagjit Singh succeeded in 1959 bitterness between Congress and Namdhari Sikhs subsided as he was man of peaceful disposition and wished to improve their relations with

Congress.[74]

Launching of Punjabi Suba Morcha by Master Tara Singh in 1948 put the Namdhari Sikhs in a moral crisis. Since the inception of their sect, they had been votaries of Punjabi language in Gurmukhi script and Punjabiat (cultural plurality). However, Master Tara Singh's communal underpinnings of his demand for Punjabi Suba went against their conviction. The Namdhari leadership shared the broader concern of the Congress leadership that such demand, if conceded, could be a threat to the unity and integrity of the Indian State. It was only when Sant Fateh Singh took over the command of Punjabi Suba Morcha in 1960 and allayed the fears of the Congress and Hindu organisations only then the Namdhari Sikhs supported this movement. They made an appeal to the Hindus that they should recognize Punjabi language as their mother tongue. Namdhari Guru told the Hindus that he appreciated the relevance of Hindi language and reminded the Hindus and Sikhs that they belonged to the same stock (race) and were twin-brothers of the same mother. He advised them to resolve the linguistic issue amicably. He himself did notsee anything wrong if the formation of the Punjabi Suba could turn the Sikhs into a majority community in Punjab. Dispelling the apprehensions of the Hindus, he said that the Punjabi Suba was going to be one of the Indian provinces. In the rest of the provinces, the Hindus were in the majority.[75]

In the last quarter of twentieth century, the Congress and the Shiromani Akali Dal took some vital decisions which put the Namdhari leadership in a tight spot and was forced to take far and against public posture. As hinted above, the Namdhari leadership supported Congress policy of maintaining unity and integrity of the Indian State. However, when Prime Minister Indira Gandhi imposed national emergency on June 25, 1975 for keeping herself in power and assumed authoritarian power and committed excesses on her opponents and people, the Namdhari leadership faced a moral crisis. They did not want to annoy Congress yet they could not ignore the

outcry of the people against these excesses. This leadership simply said that it was mistake on the part of Mrs. Gandhi to impose emergency. The subsequent developments gave ample opportunities to the Namdhari Sikhs to reiterate their loyalty to the Congress. The formation of Punjabi speaking province in 1966 gave ShiromaniAkali Dal several advantages in the regional politics. First, the Sikhs became a majority community constituting sixty per cent of the Punjab population.

Majority status of the Sikh community gave Akali leadership both psychological and demographic weightages in the regional politics. Second, the Government of India's tardy behaviour did not resolve territorial and water works issues and gave rise to the Punjab problem. The Shiromani Akali Dal with the backing of resources of SGPC, aspired for its politico-cultural hegemonic status in the Punjab State and passed Anandpur Sahib Resolution in October 1973.[76] Moreover, they joined a movement for State-Autonomy launched by several regional and a few national parties. However, the national parties like Congress and Bhartiya Janta Party percieved a threat to the unity and integrity of the Indian State from this movement and Anandpur Sahib Resolution. This resolution got more stringent criticism from all the national and regional parties. The Namdhari Sikhs too were apprehensive of the separatist underpinnings of this resolution and strongly condemned it.[77]

The rise of Sikh militancy and subsequent communal violence put the Namdhari Sikhs into a vulnerable position on some accounts. First the assertion of the Sikh orthodoxy revived theological differences between the radical Sikhs and believers of *Deh Dhari Guru* (embodied guru). Main believers comprised Nirankaris and Namdharis. The violent clash between the radical Sikhs (Damdami Taksal and Akhand Kirtani Jatha) and the Nirnakaris on April 13, 1978 left sixteen dead. This tragedy embroiled several factions of the Shiromani Akali Dal and the then Punjab Government led by ParkashSingh Badal. It brought Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwala into

the centre stage of Sikh militant politics.[78] In a communally charged atmosphere, an attempt was made by a section of the radical Sikhs to revive a conflict between the Akalis and Namdhari Sikhs. The Akalis objected to the performance of paths from the *sanchees*. Namdhari Guru Jagjit Singh was quick to realise the nature of volatile condition and agreed to perform paths from the Sri Guru Granth Sahib only. At the same time, he reiterated an old stand of his community that SGPC was not the sole spokesman of the entire Sikh community. The Namdhari Darbar pleaded to the Punjab Government and Government of India to take viewpoints of Sikh organisations other than SGPC in regard to the religious matters.[79]

Nevertheless, more serious threat to the Namdhari Sikhs came from the terrorist movement. The Sikh militants used violent means to punish their detractors (individual or organistion) if they did not comply with their diktats. In addition to the theological antagonism, the militants felt more offended when they found that the Congress Namdhari Sikhs were participating in the anti-terrorist campaign launched by the Government of India. The militants stepped up their violent designs against the Namdhari headquaters Bhaini Sahib. However, adequate armed guards and defensive mechanism of the Namdhari Sikhs particularly state protection did not allow the militants to attack and harm the Namdhari personnel and sangat at Bhaini Sahib. Nevertheless, they did succeed in their assaults on several Namdhari families in the towns and villages of Punjab.

Towards the end of 20th century, some of the senior leaders of the Shiromani Akali Dal tried to build up political links with the Namdhari Sikhs. They often went to Bhaini Sahib headquarters and sought Satguru's blessings. On certain occasions, they addressed the Namdhari-sangats highlighting historical role played by the Namdhari Sikhs in the freedom struggle. They also took up the demands of the Namdhari Sikhs and ensured official support. Besides, SGPC revived the practice of associating the Namdhari Sikhs with some committees. Parkash Singh Badal, the then

President of the Shiromani Akali Dal, took a lead in this regard and partly succeeded in making a dent in the traditional vote-bank of the Congress. It was he who in the capacity of Chief Minister of the Akali-Jan Sangh Coalition Government Punjab, allotted pieces of land where Namdhari Sikhs made sacrifices, gave financial aids to some projects and established the Namdhari Guru Ram Singh Chair, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar (2001). In response to the pro-Namdhari politics of Akali supremo Parkash Singh Badal, several Namdhari leaders feel and realize that the Akalis are as relevant as the Congress for the betterment of the Namdhari community. Moreover, they also realize that the microscopic religious minorities can only assert their relevance in the coalition politics or multi-party system.

Organisational Structure of Namdharis

The Namdhari Guru is head of both spiritual and temporal affairs of hisfollowers. On his behalf, more than thirty three subas are looking after the community-affairs in Punjab alone. In terms of representation of Subas, Malwaregion of Punjab State is ahead of Doaba and Majha regions. However, the representation of Subas and other local leaders is determined by the historical, administrative and demographic exigencies. Haryana State is represented bythe four Subas for the reason of Sri Jiwan Nagar in Sirsa District is being another headquarters. There are several villages in this district which have major concentrations of the Namdhari Sikhs (largely agriculturists who came from Pakistan in 1946-47). The Namdhari artisans, businessmen and professional have also migrated to the towns and cities of India in sinceindependence. The capital of India, New Delhi, has emerged an important centre of religio-political activities of the Namdhari community. Several Namdhari leaders and functionaries come from Delhi alone. The representationhas also been given to the Namdhari sangats of Jammu (J & K) and Mandi (Himachal Pradesh). Majority of these Namdhari Sikhs are migrants from Pakistan. A substantial number of Namdhari Sikhs are found in

the towns and cities of U.P. A few Subas represent their community. Besides, several Subas represent the Namdhari-Sikhs of Thailand, Kenya, Canada and England. The Namdhari Gurus have recongnised their significant contribution (largely financial) to the programmes of the community developments. For maintaining rapport with their followers, they have often been visiting these countries. Majority of these Namdhari Sikhs belong to Khatri, Arora and Ramgharia castes.

However, the status, duties and obligations of the Subedars including local functionaries have gone under change since the founding of the Namdhari Darbar in 1935. The latter has emerged as an apex body of sharing experiences and taking decisions. It comprises Subas, local leaders and prominent Namdhari personnel. It has its administrative hierarchy of President, Vice- President, Secretary and other functionaries. All its members and office bearers enjoy their tenures and status according to Satguru's will and trust. In its periodical meetings, the Namdhari Darbar takes decisions in regard to the social, religious, financial, political, administrative and judicial matters. However, all its decisions become operative only when Satguru gives his consent. Technically Satguru's confidants, Subas and administrative personnel are instrumentals in executing his decisions. The Darbar issues circulars and advisories to the Namdhari community as and when required. Even verbal instructions are also issued on urgent or sensitive matters.[80]

In the wake of new concerns and challenges, the Namdhari leadership has evolved several administrative departments and institutions in recent times. For maintaining the financial transactions, the *Lekha Vibhag Parbandhak* Committee was formed. The financial transactions pertain to the accounts of collection of income and expenditure. The income mainly come from the *dasvand* (voluntary offerings), revenue from the landed property, agriculture farms and donations whereas the expenditure items comprise purchase of landed property, construction of various buildings including health and educational institutions and memorials, the

maintenance of infrastructure, holding religious congregations, salaries to the administrative personnel and transportation/communication etc. Similarly, the Namdhari leadership is seized of the growing irreligiousness among the Namdhari boys and girls on the one hand and their alienation from their cultural heritage on the other hand. Tomeet this challenge, it has established *Vishav Namdhari Vidyak Jatha* in 1965 and its subsequent wing *Vishav Namdhari Istri Vidyak Jatha* in 1981. The scope of functioning these institutions have been confined to the socio- religious orientation. The founding of modern and technical institutions is not its primary concern. The Namdhari leadership has confronted another serious problem of commercialization and cultural vulgarization of the marriage institution. To keep its simplicity and dowry free, Namdhari Guru Partap Singh made obligatory for his followers to soleminize the marriage ceremony only at Bhaini Sahib headquaters. He established the Anand Karaj committee to conduct these marriages as per Namdhari maryada.

Namdhari Contributions

The Namdhari Gurus have been praising Guru Nanak Dev and his successors for integrating the devotional singing with the spiritual attainments. The Sikh Gurus believed that devotional singing could destroy falsehood in the person and lead them to the spiritual realm. In the Adi Granth, the hymns were classified according to the *ragas* (thirty one) and professional musicians were deployed to perform kirtan in the religious congregations. With the founding of Harmandir Sahib, Amritsar and other gurdwaras, the tradition of kirtan came into being. Moreover, this tradition was further groomed by the deras of the Seva Panthis and Nirmalas in eighteenth and nineteenth century. Themodern Sikh organisations (Singh Sabhas, Diwans and Chief Khalsa Diwans) too enriched this tradition when they engaged the services of professional ragis. To carry on this Sikh heritage, Namdhari Satguru Ram Singh revived kirtan and formed jathas of devotional singers. His successors Partap Singhand Jagjit

Singh were trained in the Shastri Sangeet (vocal and instrumental) by Ustads like Sant Mastan Singh and Bhai Gajja Singh. Satguru Partap Singh deployed professional *rababis* who performed kirtan of *Asa Di Var* in ragas for more than two and half hours in the morning and some hours in the evening. He established the *Namdhari Mahavidalaya* in 1928 and Bhai Harman Singh (Chavinda) was appointed Ustad for imparting Shastri Sangeet to the students. Occasionally, Bhai Taba and Bhai Naseer performed ragas at Bhaini Sahib till they migrated to Pakistan in 1947. Satguru Partap Singh also organized *Gurmat Sangeet Samelan* in 1933 which endeared Bhaini Sahib to contemporary prominent Ustads (vocal and instrumental). His successor Satguru Jagjit Singh enriched this tradition and imparted training to the youngsters in *shastri gayan* (classical singing) and organised national Gurmat Sangeet Samelans at Delhi, Mumbai, Aurangabad and Lucknow from 1973- 1980. He established several centres for learning music in India and abroad. Premiere among these is Satguru Partap Singh Acadamy which has produced several Namdhari Ustads of national fame. Sangeetkar Bibi Narinder Kaur has made an important contribution in grooming Namdhari boys and girls in the devotional music. Like his father, Satguru Jagjit Singh engaged the services of the eminent Ustads for training his students in Shastri Sangeet. He himself wasan innovative of new *bandashes* and earned the distinction of being connoisseur of Shastri Sangeet.[81]

Besides, Namdhari Gurus have made a distinct contribution to the sports. Learning martial art *Gatka* (an art of wielding swords), horse riding and pegging has been transformed into the modern sports. Satguru Jagjit Singh formed Namdhari Sports Acadmey and built up Sports Staduim. He took akeen interest in promoting the hockey and laid down astro turf ground for it. He engaged the services of coaches of national fame and prepared an exclusive Namdhari Hockey Team. It has participated in several national and international tournaments and won medals. Moreover, the Namdhari Sports Academy has also produced several hockey players

who have the distinction ofplaying for the Indian National Hockey Team. These players are Harpal Singh, Sardara Singh (Captain of Indian Hockey Team), Jasbir Singh, Sher Singh, Gurwinder Singh, Gurcharan Singh, Karamjit Singh, Avtar Singh, Anmol Singh, Harwinder Singh, Savinder Singh and Harjinder Singh. Satguru Uday Singh is the patron of Namdhari Hockey Team.[82]

Satguru Jagjit Singh belonged to a rare category of religious leaders of Punjab who took a keen interest in innovation in seed technology which was essentially required for the beginning of second phase of the Green Revolution. By its very definition, the Green Revolution implied adoption of new techniques in maximizing the agro-production. The seed technology was one of the primary techniques. The agro-scientists and technologists still strive for another breakthrough in seed technologies for ending the stagnation in the production and starting crop diversification. However, the agro-scientists and social environmentalists cry loudly for more eco-friendly and sustainable agro- production. This production, they emphasize, should be free from diseases and healthy for the consumptions of human beings and animals. They further pleadthat the seed technology should continue to generate prosperity and sustain it in terms of new avenues of livelihood as well as entrepreneurship in ruralIndia. In meeting this challenge, Maharaj Uday Singh formed Namdhari Seeds under the patronage of Satguru Jagjit Singh in 1985. It started breeding programmes to develop sustainable and adaptable hybrids for vegetable crops. Within a decade, it started producing 500 hybrids and varieties in 20 different crops globally. The Namdhari Seeds also diversified into production, export and domestic retailing of fresh vegetables through the subsidiaries Namdhari Farm Fresh and Namdhari Agro Fresh. The Namdhari Seeds has also expanded its activities to S.E. Asian countries (Bangladesh, Thailand, Vietnam and Indonesia) and Middle East (Egypt, Jordan, Syria and Saudi) besides Turkey. Their hybrids have been accepted in many of these markets. The company has now diversified into field crops and developed cotton and rice hybrids.

Today the Namdhari Group of Companies has created job opportunities for more than5,000 people.[83]

Namdhari Code of Conduct

The Namdhari Sikhs believe that Satguru is the only one who can judge their right and wrong actions and command them to lead their life accordingly. Theyfeel blessed for they have a true spiritual master who can liberate them from sufferings and sorrows. They take them as the will of their Satguru who is the saviour of the human beings. It is the grace of Satguru that they seek spiritual quest and attain bliss. Moreover, they believe that their Satguru is *bakhshanhar*(forgiver) and atones their sins.[84]

The Namdhari Sikhs observe maryada which comprises daily *nam simran*, earning livelihood by honest means and show piety to the people. After taking full bath, they meditate on the name of God in the early morning. As early as 1940, Namdhari Guru Partap Singh obliged his followers to perform nam simran only for an hour daily. However, they are free to recite *nam shabad* (hymns) with rosary in hands whenever they wish to do that. Majority of the Namdhari Sikhs only meditate in the early morning and then carry on their routine work in the rest of the day. They also participate in the collective congregations called *jap paryog*, *varni* (rituals of meditation) and havan which are arranged by the local leadership on certain days (preferably on Thursday and Sunday). Periodical *melas* (socio-religious festivals) particularly *asu da- mela* are also organised at Bhaini Sahib headquarters in which thousands of Namdhari Sikhs from distant villages and towns participate.

On all occasions of joys and sorrows, the Namdhari Sikhs arrange path (reading) of the Adi-Granth. The pathis (scripture-readers) perform this job within seven days. The Adi-Granth is placed in a room or place after cleaning or washing it. The family-members, kiths and kins attentively listen path. At the end, *vak* (receiving

guru's word or command from the Adi-Granth) is taken and *ardas* (supplication) is performed. Then sacramental food (*karah parsad*) is distributed. The divan is also held for shabad-kirtan. For performing akhand-path, (a continuous reading) elaborate arrangements are required. The orthodox Namdhari-Sikhs known as *Sodhis* perform this job. Most of the Sodhis stay at Bhaini Sahib. The date for performing path or akhand- path is arranged according to the availability of these Sodhis. The well-water is arranged in a big quantity for drinking and washing (the tap-water is not used). Similarly, other *samagari* (ration) is arranged in advance. However, utmost attention is given to the mode of cooking and serving food. Performing akhand-path has become an expensive ritual.

The Namdhari Sikhs perform ceremonies related to birth, marriage and death in accordance to their own maryada. However, they are not totally free from the customs of their respective *zat-biradris* (endogamous brotherhood). A birth of a child (boy) is celebrated by distributing sweets (*lodoos*). After thirteen days, mother of the child resumes the kitchen work with some ceremony which is known as *chaunke charna.* The puritan Namdhari Sikhs initiate both mother and child and name to the child. It is known as *namkaran* ceremony. Sometimes, kiths and kins are invited on this occasion. Langar is served in the end. Similarly, they solemnize marriages by anand-riti. As per the commands of Satguru, parents are supposed to perform this ritual at Bhaini Sahib alone. The parents, in consultation with local leaders or the nearest or dearest, propose boy or girl and seek Satguru's approval. They fill up a performa which has been designed by the Vishav Namdhari Sangat, Bhaini Sahib. The performa records their names, occupation, *gotra* (exogamous caste group) of their paternal and maternal homes; date of birth, height and qualifications of girl and boy. The parents give undertaking that they have not given or received dowry and commit no violation of commands of Sri Satguru. The Vishav Namdhari Sangat certifies that both boy and girl are of stipulated age, gurmukh in appearance and can recite ardas. The sangat also ensures that the

families are not close relatives. A Suba and two responsible persons also certify the above mentioned antecedents. Before solemnizing anand-riti, the parents perform *sehaj paths* (reading Adi-Granth) at their respective houses or at Bhaini Sahib. However, it is not mandatory. In case, path is to be performed at Bhaini Sahib they deposit some amount. The anand-riti is solemnized individually or collectively. The mass marriages are arranged periodically.

Ideally speaking, the Namdhari Sikhs perceive death of a person as Almighty's will and avoid breast beating and loud wailing. However, in actual practice, the nearest and dearest of the deceased person often give way to their emotional outburst. According to the Namdhari maryada, the deceased person is given full bath and administered amrit. Pyre is raised keeping head of the dead towards Pol-Star. Ashes are collected in a bag and thrown into flowing water. The Namdhari Sikhs do not go to any marked places like Haridwar or Kiratpur or Goindwal for disposing of remains of the deceased persons. They perform a path either at local dharamsala or Bhaini Sahib.[85]

With the passage of time, the orthodox Namdhari maryada is being supplanted by the western life style among a section of this community. A unique look of a Namdhari-Sikh in the *kurta-pajama* (long shirt-trosurer) and round *dastar* (turban) made of white hand spun has been partly replaced by thewestern dress. However, the mass-gatherings of the Namdhari-Sikhs at Bhaini Sahib give impression of continuity of their customary dress. Similarly, the Namdhari women of recent generation have temptation for modern fashion anduse cosmetics and jewellery against the wishes of their Satguru. Television media has made inroads into the Namdhari-families too. They view television in spite of its prohibition. Moreover, the boys and daughters of the orthodox Namdhari parents, when married into non-Namdhari families, quickly deviate from the Namdhari-maryada as the latter ask the former to conduct *anand riti* according to the popular maryada of the Sikhs (SGPC) and

also arrange marriage parties etc. However, number of such cases are marginal.[86]

Conclusion

Briefly speaking, over a period of one hundred fifty years, the microscopic Namdhari community has undergone radical changes. In the mid nineteenth century its founders revived Sikhism, nostalgia of the Khalsa raj and confronted the British. Ostracized by the Tat Khalsa, they shed off their sectarian character and tried to integrate themselves with the world of Hindus, Indian nationalists and revolutionaries. They espoused unity and integrity of the country, cultural commonality, peaceful co-existence and communal harmony. Simultaneously, they responded to the national/regional politics but opposed separatist forces. In between they sought state patronage for expanding and building their headquarters, institutions and heritage. In recent years, they have widened the scope of their mission and promoted the *shastri sangeet*, sports and agrarian technologies.

Notes

[1] Joginder Singh, *Namdhari Guru Ram Singh,* National Book Trust, India, New Delhi, 2010, pp. 148-9.

[2] 'Preface', *A Short History of Namdhari Sikhs*, (Joginder Singh), Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar, 2010.

[3] Syad Muhammad Latif, *History of the Panjab: From the Remotest Antiquity to the Present Time,* Eurasia Publishing House, New Delhi, 1964 (reprint), pp. 594-5.

[4] Ibid, p. 595

[5] Cited in *Namdhari Sikhs the Pioneer Freedom Fighters*, (H S Hanspal), Namdhari Darbar, Bhaini Sahib, Punjab, 2006, p. 80.

[6] Jaswinder Singh, *Kukas of Note in the Punjab: Kuka Documents 1881,* Namdhari Darbar, Bhaini Sahib 1984 and *Kuka Movement: Freedom Struggle in Punjab,* 1985; Bhai Nahar Singh and Bhai Kirpal Singh, *Rebels Against the British Rule, Delhi, 1995.*

[7] Joginder Singh, *Namdhari Guru Ram Singh,* pp. 148-9.

[8] Harjot Oberoi, "Brothers of the Pure: The Poetics and Politics of Cultural Transgression," *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 26, Pt. I, Feburary 1992, pp. 157- 97.

[9] W.H. McLeod, 'The Kukas: A Millenarian Sect of the Punjab', *Social and Political Movements: Readings on Punjab*, (Eds. Harish K Puri, Paramjit Singh Judge) Rawat Publications, Jaipur, 2004, pp. 27-56.

[10] Jaswinder Singh, *Kukas of Note in the Punjab,* Namdhari Darbar, Bhaini Sahib, Ludhiana, 1984, pp. 74-5, 92-3, 116-7.

[11] Joginder Singh, *The Namdhari Sikhs: Their Changing Social and Cultural Landscape*, Manohar Publications, New Delhi, 2013, pp. 87-9.

[12] Ibid, pp. 191-2.

[13] Ibid, pp. 115-6.

[14] Surjit Kaur Jolly, *Sikh Revivalist Movement,* Gitanjali Publishing House, New Delhi, 1988, pp. 39-40.

[15] From T.H. Thornton, Secretary to Government Punjab to J.W. Wyllie Secy, Govt. of India, Foregin Deptt, No-57, 2 Feb 1867: Nahar Singh, *Guru Ram Singh and the Kukas Sikhs: 1863-1871 Documents*-I, Amrit Co New Delhi; 1965, p. 29.

[16] There were several other *sants* and *babas* who established their centres of propagation of *nam-simran*. Prominent among them were Baba Dayal (1783- 1855) and Baba Bir Singh of (1768-1844) of Naurangabad. The former was the founder of Nirankari mission whereas the latter established his *dera* in the village of Naurangabad near Tarn Taran: Harbans Singh (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of Sikhism*, Volume I, Punjabi University, Patiala, 1992, pp. 265-66, 376-77. Similarly, Bhagat Jawahar Mal was known for his piety and addressed as Sain Sahib in 1847, Jawahar Mal opened a centre for divine worship entitled the *Jagiasi* and *Abhiasi*, see, Khushwant Singh, *A History of the Sikhs*, Vol. 2, Oxford India Paperbacks, 1999, p. 128.

[17] There is a difference of opinion about the exact date of the initiation of the movement. Contemporary sources mention that 'Guru' Ram Singh commenced in the Ludhiana District about the year 1857: Nahar Singh, *Guru Ram Singh and the Kukas Sikhs. Documents-Vol-I, p-30*. Ganda Singh, Fauja Singh and some others eminent scholars accept Baisakhi of 1857 A.D. See, Fauja Singh, *Kuka Movement,* Moti Lal Banarsi Das, Delhi, 1965, p. 19.Ganda Singh, *Kukiya di Vithiya*, p 34, M.M. Ahluwalia, *Kukas: The Freedom Fighters of Punjab,* Allied Publishers, Bombay, 1965, p. 53.

[18] *Satjug*, 22 Magh 1986 (1929 A.D.), Fauja Singh, *Kuka Movement*, p. 19.

[19] Randhir Singh (ed.), *Granth Prem Sumarag: Arthat Khalsai Jiwan Jhach*

(P), New Book Company, Jalandhar, 1965: see, its text, pp 1-4.

[20] "Chandi di Var (the Ballad of goddess Chandi) or, to give it its exact

title, *Var Sri Bhagauti Ji Ki*, by Guru Gobind Singh and included in the *Dasam Granth*, is the story of the titantic contest between Chandi and other gods on the one hand and the demons on the other. The poem allegorizes the eternal conflict between good and evil. The source of the legend is "Devi mahatmya," a section of the *Markandeya-purana,* and the narrative follows, in the main, the classical detail though the dominant interest lies in the character of Chandi which, through the creative genius of the poet, attains reality and firmness belying its mythical origin. The *Var*, in Punjabi, is one of the trilogy of poems about Chandi in the *Dasam Granth,* the other two being in Braj": *The Encyclopaedia of Sikhism*, (ed. Harbans Singh), Vol.I, Punjabi University,Patiala, 1995, p 434.

[21] For details of this ceremony, see, M.M. Ahluwalia, pp. 48-49.

[22] Ibid, p. 48.

[23] *Satug,* 22 magh 1986 (1929.A.D) pp10-40; also see, Jaswant Singh Jas,

Baba Ram Singh Namdhari, Kasturi Lal &Sons,Amritsar 1958,p17

[24] Fauja Singh, *Kuka Movement*, p. 34.

[25] Cited in *Gaatha Sutantarta Sangram Di,* (Dalip Singh Namdhari), NamdhariDarbar, Bhaini Sahib, 2002, pp. 27-28.

[26] For detail, see, *Mahan Noor*: *Sri Satguru Partap Singh* ji, Navyug PublishersDelhi, 1999, pp 197-238; Jaswant Singh Jass, *Baba Ram Singh Namdhari*, Kasturi Lal & Sons, Amritsar, 1958, p. 17.

[27] Nahar Singh, *Guru Ram Singh and the Kuka Sikhs*, Vol. 1, p. 28.

[28] From T.H. Thorton Secretary to Government of Punjab to J.S. Wyllie, Officially Scey, to Government of India Foreign Deptt. No-154-157, dated 2nd Feb 1867: Nahar Singh Documents-I p. 34.

[29] From Inspector General of Police, Punjab to Secretary to Government Punjab-No-II- 188,20th January 1868: Nahar Singh, Vol-I, pp. 70-71.

[30] M.M. Ahluwalia, *Kukas*, p. 64.

[31] *Basant Ank of Satjug*, Samvat 1986 (1929 AD), p. 43.

[32] Jaswinder Singh, *Sri Satguru Ram Singh Ji De Hukamname*, Namdhari Darbar, Bhaini Sahib, Ludhiana, p. 21.

[33] Ibid, pp. 350-351, 382-83.

[34] Joginder Singh, *A Short History of Namdhari Sikhs of Punjab,* Guru NanakDev University, Amritsar, 2010, pp. 129-30.

[35] Ibid, p. 131.

[36] Khushwant Singh, *The Sikhs*, George Allen & Unwin, London, 1953, p. 52.

[37] Some scholars hold the view that *Kuka* movement was essentially a socio- religious movement. They draw their inferences primarily on the assumption that there is no contemporary evidence available which could substantiate political motives and organisational set-up of the Kukas. The Namdhari scholars, according to them, are politically motivated and distorting the socio- religious version of the Kuka movement. For details, see, Ganda Singh, "Kuka (Namdhari) Lehar", *Punjab: Bhai Jodh Singh Abhinandan Granth* (ed.Ganda Singh), Punjabi Sahitya Academy, Ludhiana, 1962, pp. 96-112; Bhagat Singh, "The Kuka Movement", *The Panjab Past and Present, Vol. II,* Pt. I, Punjabi University, Patiala, 1973, pp. 148-55.

[38] Shamsher Singh Ashok, *Punjab Dian Lehran,* Ashok Pustak Mala, Patiala, 1974, p. 70. However, in some quarters, doubts were raised about the aims of Baba Ram Singh and it was thought that under the religious garb the plans for the overthrow of the British rule were concealed: *The Foreign Missionary*, pp. 68.

[39] Kushwant Singh, *A History of the Sikhs, Vol. II,* p. 190.

[40] Ibid, p. 130.

[41] M M Ahluwalia, Kukas, Allied Publishers, Bombay, 1965, pp. 70-71; also see, Nahar Singh, "*Guru Ram Singh Ji Ate Nepal Sarkar"*, *Satjug* (ed. Pritam Singh), Sri Jiwan Nagar, Hissar, 1966, pp. 62-72.

[42] For details, see, Fauja Singh, pp. 76-77; "... The Kuka leadership seemed well aware of all the issues involved in the problem of

stopping the kine- killing. To them an attack on the butchers was, in fact, an attack on the Government. It was, therefore, not an act of religious fanaticism, but a step forward in their national struggle against the new rulers of the country..."

[43] M M Ahluwalia, *Kukas*, pp. 78-93.

[44] For details, see, Fauja Singh, pp. 161-4.

[45] Ganda Singh (ed.), Maharaja Duleep Singh Correspondence, Punjabi University, Patiala, 1977, pp. 83, 90, 95, 105. After his conversion to Christianity, Dalip Singh left India for England in 1854 and was accorded warm welcome by the Royal family particularly by Queen Victoria. In 1860,he came to see his mother Maharani Jind Kaur. Again, he came to India in 1864 to perform the last rites of his mother who died on October 18, 1863. On his way back, he married Bamba Muller, the daughter of a German Merchant on June 7, 1864 at Alexandria. Meanwhile, he incurred a heavy debt. He made several appeals but the British government did not restore his private estate and property and decided to seal off Elevden Hall Estate after his death. Strained by the huge debt, the ex-Maharaja returned to India. But beforesailing, he proclaimed himself as the sovereign of the Sikh 'nation' in 1887 and also called upon his countrymen to rise against the British.

[46] Ibid, p. 104: "According to the Paris Correspondent of the Daily Chronicle Tribune, June 8, 1887, 'he went to Russia with the object of seeking permission of the Russian authorities to be allowed to proceed through Central Asia to the Afghans frontier' and also to persuade them to invade India"; also see, Fauja Singh, "Maharaja Dalip Singh Te Kukian De Parspar Sambandh", *Satyug* (ed. Pritam Singh), Sri Jiwan Nagar, Hissar, 1966, p. 51.

[47] M M Ahluwalia, *Kukas*, p. 33.

[48] Gurcharan Singh, *"Sardar Thakur Singh Sandhanwalia"*, Punjabi University, Patiala, 1970, p. 25.

[49] Grudial Singh, "Sardar Thakur Singh Sandhanwalia", *The Panjab Past and Present, Vol. II*, Pt. II, Punjabi University, Patiala, 1968, pp. 363-4: The number of the Sikh and Rajput soldiers is given at forty

thousand. The rulers with whom Thakur Singh established contacts were Patiala, Nabha, Jind, Faridkot, Punch, Jaipur, Alwar, Bikaner, Indore and Hyderabad. The author claims that some of them even agreed to extend their armed help to theMaharaja.

[50] Percival Spear, *A History of India, Vol. II*, Penguin Books, 1977, pp. 253-4 (hereafter Percival Spear)

[51] Gurdial Singh, "Sardar Thakur Singh Sandhanwalial", *The Panjab Past and Present*, p. 385.

[52] For detail, see, Rattan Singh Jaggi, *Guru Granth Vishavkosh,* Pt.-I, Punjabi University, Patiala, 2002, pp .79-80.

[53] Cited in *Satjug*(Speical issue), March-April, 2001, p. 48.

[54] Joginder Singh, (2010), p. 78.

[55] Inder Singh Chakarvarti, "Gur Avtar", *Satjug,* Sri Bhaini Sahib, 1929, pp. 8- 9.

[56] Ibid.

[57] As the story goes "at Chak Nanaki (Anandpur), a group of Kashmiri *pandits* driven to desperation by the bigoted policies of the Mughal Governor Iftikhar Khan (16-71-75) called on Guru Tegh Bahadur on 25 May 1675 to narratetheir tale of woe…": *Encyclopaedia of Sikhism,* (Harbans Singh), Vol IV, Punjabi University, Patiala, 1998, p. 332.

[58] Ibid, p. 333.

[59] Inder Singh Chakarvarti, pp. 8-9.

[60] Ibid, p. 10.

[61] Ibid, p. 11.

[62] Bhai Parmanand, "Satguru Ram Singh Ji," *Satjug,* Basant Ank, 1928, p. 110.[63] Swami Sawantar Nand, "Sri Satguru Ram Singh Ji Aur Arya Samaj," *BasantAnk Satjug,* 1928, pp. 92-93.

[64] The Hindu Mahasabha was founded in 1915 as a political party by Punjabi Hindus (qq.v.) resentful of the extra weightage given to Muslims in the province by the system of separate electorates

introduced in 1909. Later, underthe Presidentship of Madan Mohan Malaviya (q.v.), the Hindu Mahasabha overhauled its organization and declared its larger goal to be "the maintenance,protection and promotion of the Hindu race, Hindu culture and Hindu civilization for the advancement of the Hindu Rastra [nation]." To that end it projected India as a Holy Land, adopted Hindi as its language, advocated cow protection as state policy, and encouraged an active program of *shuddhi,* or purification, and "reconversion" of Christians, Muslims, and Sikhs (qq.v.) to the Hindu fold: Surjit Mansingh, *Historical Dictionary of India,* Vision Books,New Delhi, 2003, pp. 173-74.

[65] Rashtryia Swayamsewak Sangh was founded by Keshav Baliram Hedgewar (1889-1940) in Nagpur as an instrument of Hindu cultural revitalization and consolidation in 1925. "On Ram Navami day, 1926, the infant organization, after considerable discussion between Hedgewar and his co-founders, gave itself the name of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh. Hedgewar insisted on the term *'rashtriya'* (national) for its exclusively Hindu organization, for he wanted to re-assert the identity of Hindu with *rashtriya.* A flag was chosen that allegedly belonged to Ram, and was said to have been used by Shivaji. A prayer, in mixed Hindi and Marathi, would be sung at the end of every *shakha* meeting, along with the slogans of *Rashtra guru Samarth Ramdas ki jai* and *Bharat Mata ki jai.* The prominence of Shivaji, his flag, and his guru Ramdasin RS ritual gave it a strongly Maharastrian complexion, leading even to rumours that its aim was a Peshwa restoration": *Khaki Shorts Saffron Flags*,Orient Longman, New Delhi, 1993, p. 18.

[66] For detail, see, *Satjug,* March 1938, p. 13; April 1938, p. 5.

[67] Francine, R. Frankel, *India's Political Economy 1947-2004,* Oxford, IndianPaper backs, 2006, pp. 697-98.

[68] Bipan Chandra, *Indian Struggle for Independence*, Penguin Books, NewDelhi, 1989, p. 437.

[69] Kushwant Singh, *A History of the Sikhs*, (1839-2004, p. 239 (footnote).

[70] Kuldip Singh, *The Namdhari Movement: Continuity and Change*, Ph.DThesis, Guru Nanak Dev Universtiy, p. 146.

[71] Pritam Singh Kavi, *Beete Diyan Piran*, Vol.3, Sahit Parkashan, Delhi, 1992,p. 432.

[72] Bipan Chandra, Mridula Mukherjee, Aditya Mukherjee, *India AfterIndependence 1927-2000,* Penguin Books, New Delhi, 2000, p. 30.

[73] See, *Pravachan-His Holiness Sri Satguru Jagjit Singh Ji,* (Compiler Harvendra Singh Hanspal), Namdhari Darbar, 2001, pp. 63-68.

[74] Babusha, *The Namdhari Sikhs of Punjab* (1947-2001), Ph.D Thesis, GNDU,2012, pp. 181-82.

[75] Beant Kaur (ed.), *lal Eh Rattan*,Vol V, Namdhari Darbar, Bhaini Sahib,Ludhiana, pp. 133-37.

[76] Khuswant Singh, A History of the Sikhs, Vol. II, Oxford India Paperbacks, 2011, p. 337-44.

[77] Joginder Singh (2010), pp. 140-42

[78] Ibid, pp. 141-42.

[79] Babusha, p. 191.

[80] Ibid, pp. 138-9.

[81] Pritam Singh Kavi, "Satguru Partap Singh Ji and Sangeet", *Maha Noor: Sri Satguru Partap Singh Ji* (Ed. Pritam Singh Arsi), Navyug Publisher, Delhi, 1992, pp. 197-221; Amarjit Kaur, *Sri Bhaini Sahib Raian*, Bhasha Vibhag, Punjab, 2009, pp. 105-11:

Visiting Prominent Ustads

Ustad Walayat Khan (Sitar)

Ustad Ali Amzad Khan

Pt. Krishan Maharaj (Tabla)

Pt. Shanta Parsad (Tabla)

Pt. Hari Parsad Chaurasia (Bansari)

Pt. Ram Narayan (Sarangi)

Pt. Shiv Kumar Sharma (Santoor)

Pt. Rajan Sajan Misra

Pt. Birju Maharaj (Narit)

Namdhari Prominent Sangeetkars

Ustad Harbhajan Singh

Gurdev Singh

Ustad Nihal Singh

Mohan Singh

Sukhdev Singh

Harbans Singh Ghula

Sher Singh

Sukhwinder Singh Sukhi

Balwant Singh

[82] Amarjit Kaur, pp. 46-7.

[83] www.namdhariseeds.com/inspiration#sthash.7rdy9fCk.dpuf.

[84] Joginder Singh (2013), p. 157.

[85] Ibid, pp. 167-8.

[86] Ibid, pp. 161-3.